Host and Non-Host Resident Perceptions and Awareness of Legacies for the 2010 Vancouver Games

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Mega-events such as the Olympic Games are capable of drawing tourists, increasing the countries international image and creating an economic benefit, and demand considerable capital in terms of resources and investments by the host-city (Cornelissen, Bob, & Swart, 2011). As Horne (2007) indicated, when a country is awarded to host a mega-event it results in an increase of media attention and there are “significant consequences for the host city, region, or nation in which they occur” (p. 82). Thus, the need to examine legacies of mega-events from host and non-host residents is crucial as it is the residents that experience these lasting legacies directly and contribute to the success of hosting mega-events (Guala & Turco, 2009). Given the large investment among host cities, the question about legacy program creation and management becomes important. To create and manage such programs that benefit residents research should examine prominent legacy aspects among residents of the host country (i.e., host/non-host city) overtime (pre-, during, and post-event). This study aimed to understand and describe host and non-host residents’ perceptions regarding dominant legacy themes and residents’ awareness of specific legacies six month prior to; during; and, six months after the 2010 Vancouver Olympic Games.

Hosting a mega-event can serve as a catalyst resulting in changes to the host city or nation that can be considered legacies that are both tangible (e.g., economic, infrastructure) and intangible (e.g., transfer of knowledge, image and reputation of the host city or nation) (Kaplanidou & Karadakis, 2010; Dansero & Puttilli, 2010). Research examining mega-event legacy has identified that legacies are comprised of multidimensional aspects, categorized as economic, tourist-related, physical, sporting, cultural, infrastructural, social, environmental, political, architectural and urbanistic (Cornelissen, Bob, & Swart, 2011; Dansero & Puttilli, 2010; Cashman, 2005; Moragas, Kennett, & Puig, 2003). There is a lack of literature examining host and non-host residents perceptions of legacies (Deccio & Baloglu, 2002). As such, host and non-host residents’ perceptions of the legacies associated with hosting a mega-event over time, and reports of any perceptual changes that occur over time are not readily available (Kim, Gursoy, & Lee, 2006). Gaining an understanding of what legacies are prominent and which legacies residents are aware of, event organizers can identify prominent legacies for host and non-host residents focusing resources into increasing residents’ awareness of legacy programs.

In order to examine what legacies are prominent and which legacies host and non-host residents are most aware of, the sample included residents living in Vancouver, British Columbia and Ottawa, Ontario. A phone list using the latest phone book from Vancouver, BC and Ottawa, ON was used. The researcher randomly selected 1330 telephone numbers from Vancouver and 300 from Ottawa. A total of 762 individuals were contacted between the beginning of July 2009 and mid October 2009 and asked to participate in the study. A total of 102 respondents agreed to participate, 48 from Vancouver and 54 from Ottawa. The second phase took place during the Olympic Games in February 2010. Individuals who agreed to participate in the first phase were contacted. Forty two (n=42) from Vancouver and 48 respondents from Ottawa responded to the survey. The third phase occurred six months after the Olympic Games. Participants were contacted from August 2010 until the end of September 2010. Forty one (n=41) respondents agreed to continue from Vancouver and 43 from Ottawa for a final number of 84 participants. Echtner and Ritchie’s (1993) measurement paradigm was adapted to measure legacy aspects, asking respondents to indicate three words that come to mind when they think of the term Legacy of the 2010 Olympic Games. The words generated were classified into eight themes (outlined in the results) which were confirmed by two faculty members with expertise in sport tourism and two PhD students in sport management and tourism for face and content validity. A five point likert-scale (where 1=not at all aware and 5=extremely aware) from 19 items found in the Vancouver Olympic Games Bid Book in the Legacy section was used to measure legacy awareness. Demographics were also collected from the respondents. SPSS 18.0 was used to analyze responses and frequency counts of words associated with each of the Legacy aspects.

Themes generated from respondents were economic, socio-cultural, organizational, environmental, sport, tourism,
event prestige, and psychological. Frequency analysis of the legacy themes prior to the event revealed, Vancouver residents cited economic legacies while Ottawa residents cited psychological legacies. During and post-event, both Vancouver and Ottawa residents cited psychological legacies. For the 19 items measuring legacy awareness descriptive means revealed that pre-, during and post-event Vancouver residents were most aware of the development of the Canada Line (Mpre-event=4.17; Mduring=4.24; Mpost-event=4.17). Pre-event, Ottawa residents were most aware of the stimulation of economic activity as a result of hosting the Olympic Games (Mpre-event =3.28). During the event, Ottawa residents were most aware of the potential increase in property and rent costs due to the hosting of the Olympic Games (Mduring =3.23). Post-event, Ottawa residents were most aware of the potential increase in property and rent costs due to the hosting of the Olympic Games (Mpost-event =3.28). Due to space limitations, only the highest frequency analysis and highest means are reported, however all results will be reported in detail on the final poster.

Pre-event, host residents mentioned the economic legacies and indicated they were most aware of the potential debt and increase in rent and property taxes, whereas non-host residents mentioned the psychological legacies but were most aware of the economic legacies related to the Olympic Games. The reason behind this could be because host residents are responsible for the cost of the Olympic Games and they may experience all the construction and preparation of the Olympic Games. Non-host residents could be more concerned with the psychological aspects and aware of the economic legacies because they are only able to experience the Olympic Games through the media. During and post-event, both host and non-host residents mentioned psychological legacies. This could be attributed to the performance of the Canadian athletes on their home soil. In terms of awareness of legacies, Vancouver residents were most aware of infrastructure legacies during and post-event, while Ottawa residents were most aware of social and economic legacies. These results can be explained by the fact that the Vancouver residents can experience directly the improvements to infrastructure such as the use of the Canada line. As for Ottawa residents, being aware of the inclusion of Aboriginals and the economic benefits or costs of hosting the Olympics can be covered through media outlets thus affecting their awareness levels. It is interesting to note, that when asked about Legacies associated with the Olympics the host and non-host residents mentioned mostly psychological perceptions as time progressed, but when asked about how aware they were of certain legacies, residents indicated higher awareness of the infrastructure and economic aspects. These results suggest that event managers concerned with planning for Legacies should focus on maximizing the emotional/psychological aspects by collaborating with different tourism and government agencies in order to create a festive atmosphere and celebrate the Games at the national level. Furthermore, creating volunteer opportunities to engage host and non host residents can increase the positive experiences and provide these individuals with a feeling of inclusion.